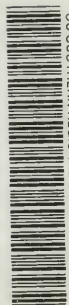


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THE APOSTLE

THE APOSTLE

A DRAMA IN THREE ACTS

BY GEORGE MOORE

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My dear Mary Hunter,

It seems to me only right that your name should appear on the first page of this little book, for on the table before me lies the Bible that you gave me twelve years ago—the best present you could have sent me, for it always keeps your memory green in my heart.

Always sincerely yours,

George Moore.

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A PREFATORY LETTER ON READING THE BIBLE FOR THE FIRST TIME

MY DEAR MEYERFELD,—Your letter is before me, telling that a friend, an able critic, has warned you against complying with my suggestion that you should write a prefatory letter to your translation of *The Apostle*, a scenario for a drama which I hope one day to write. He thinks that the literary press would resent a prefatory note by anybody except the original author. He may be right, he may be wrong; in any case your letter leaves me in no doubt that you are in full agreement with him, and will not write the introduction. But you are anxious that I should write it, and on looking into your letter again I see that you ask me to tell how I came to think of the meeting between Christ and Paul in an Essene monastery, twenty-five years after the

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Crucifixion. To answer this question fully I should have to write out the story of my life since I came to live in Ireland, and ten years of a man's life would fill several hundred pages. To condense these pages into three is impossible, but they may be condensed into a single fact. It was hatred of England's lust for the gold fields of the Transvaal that drove me out of London back to my own country, and awakened in me an overwhelming desire for everything Irish, every Irish aspect—the lonely lake, the pale line of blue mountains, the forlorn cabin; and the Gaelic language expiring on the lips of illiterate peasants was believed by me to be the only medium of literary expression. Even Ireland's superstitions were looked upon by me as unimportant, clouds that would pass away; our present duty was the revival of the language which Father Ford had declared to be worth reviving, for it contained no heresy. I felt my admiration of Ireland quake, and there were perturbations and signs of seismic troubles from time to

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time, but no high tower fell until I began to notice the convent that my back windows overlook. The nuns that walked seemingly so innocently under their trees were gradually absorbing the neighbourhood; since I had come to Ely Place an immense red school had been run up; another house and garden had been acquired by them. "Stephen's Green will soon be all convent," I said, and one day in an afternoon walk I counted eight monastic establishments in one small district in South Dublin. A few days afterwards, while walking to a business appointment in the city, ecclesiastics confronted me everywhere; seminarists going along two and two, three and three, a black queue reaching across Dublin—healthy young men, all of them, taken away from the plough, and given for wear admirable broadcloth and finely stitched boots. And the full-blown priests flaunted past me in such numbers that I began to count them—rosy-cheeked, pompous men, advertising religion along the pavement, with gold chains hung across their paunches

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and silk hats tipped over their vulpine brows. A little while afterwards my observation sharpened, and I began to notice that the poor workman's salute was only just acknowledged, and that none dared to beg from them. The half-naked children that infest the Dublin streets slink away before the priest ; never a penny is demanded from him as he strides arrogantly past, and I often wondered how this was until I saw an old woman bowing and curtsying to a priest. When she had finished her salutations she came to me asking for a penny.

“ But why, my good woman, do you not ask the holy man for one ? ”

“ If I asked him, it's the police he'd be giving me. ”

It happened to me to journey down west, and all the way across Ireland I saw great cathedrals, comfortable presbyteries and huge convents, and as the material prosperity of the Irish priests began to engage my attention the newspapers began to inform me that the Church had discovered a mine of wealth in the death-bed.

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Every month our newspapers tell a tale of contested wills, of ecclesiastics brought into court by the relations that the dead man has left destitute, of priests denouncing parishioners who have not paid for masses that were ordered. Every week the post brings a price-list of prayers from some monastery, and if an Irish Luther does not arise it is because no one is interested in religious questions in Ireland.

I have never heard of a new religious sect arising spontaneously in Ireland ; small parties of English dissidents have crept in ; the Methodists, I believe, are doing fairly well ; but Catholic Ireland remains an inert mass of ancient superstitions, as the Bishops themselves confessed, when the Pope wrote to ask them what steps they were taking against the Modernist heresy. "We are taking none," they answered, "for there is no heresy in Ireland." "And they are right," I cried. "There is no heresy ; Ireland is as incapable of independent thought as Thibet ; a sort of Western Thibet." And from that moment I recognised Ireland as an

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essentially unreligious country and myself as one of the few Irishmen interested in religious questions. That is, perhaps, why I have always felt like a stranger in my own country. My country resents my religious enthusiasms, preferring acquiescence—the acquiescence of my family, which became Catholic three generations ago for pecuniary reasons, and has remained so ever since, subscribing money to foreign missions and founding monasteries. A detestable family mine is, from a religious point of view, myself the only heretic in it, but such a natural one that I compensate, in a measure, for the spiritual apathy of the rest.

This letter must not, however, be allowed to drift into a sort of spiritual autobiography, but the title demands that I say that while a schoolboy I discovered myself to be a Protestant, and declared my religious convictions to my parents. I have no complaint to make of bigotry. My parents did not oppose my claim to the faith of my ancestors, but they did not help me to attain it by putting a

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Bible into my hands, and I might have lived all my life with only a hearsay knowledge of the book if the Boer war had not sent me into a Catholic country.

As I dip the pen in the ink to tell my first appreciations of Genesis, it strikes me that it would be well to warn you that I was not sent to the Bible by a mere access of religious curiosity. Our Bible was translated into English when the language was at its height, about one hundred years after Luther finished your translation, which must, therefore, be more archaic. I approached the Bible in a two-fold spirit, as a man of letters and as one interested in religious problems. I have put the man of letters in front of the biblical critic because Genesis appealed to me almost entirely as a quaint and curious collection of folk-tales. My literary appetency was excited as the ear of a musician might be by a collection of plain-chant tunes. In the Bible stories we get the anecdote and no more, without descriptions of scenery or analysis or character. The ancient storyteller did

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not know of these arts ; he relied entirely on the treble clef, but so characteristic are his melodies that we live in tents, flocks and herds before our eyes, the taste of goat's milk and rennet always upon our palates, never far away from the rocky solitudes of Mount Sinai. An austere life of little pleasure and with a great solicitude for the generations. Rachel gives Bilhah, her maid, to Jacob in grief for her barrenness, and when Jacob's first wife, Leah (Rachel's sister), ceases to bear children she imitates her sister's example, and gives Jacob her hand-maid, Zilpah, who bears Jacob a son, and afterwards another son. Leah bears again, and finally the Lord opens the womb of Rachel, and she begins child-bearing after many sterile years : an ethical system sprung out of the necessities of tribal life in the desert, and, I repeat, with little pleasure in it, so that the Puritan may be reconciled to patriarchal morals.

Pleasure does not appear in the life of the Hebrews until they come out of Egypt and settle in the Land of Canaan and build

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Jerusalem. In Samuel we read how David was captured by the sweetness of Bathsheba's legs while bathing, and in Chronicles how the Queen of Sheba came to Solomon "to prove him with hard questions." There is some hesitancy and circumlocution in the narrative of the old chronicler, and this is strange, for he was usually a plain speaker; but the object of the Queen's visit, nevertheless, transpires, and King Solomon gives "unto the Queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, beside that which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty."

And all these stories did I read with eagerness and interest as many another man hath done; also the story of Esther. After it the story of Job seemed to me to have been in the beginning a crude folk-tale which various rhetoricians have striven to lift into tragedy; not by developing the human motive of purification by suffering as Tourgenieff would have done, but by over-laying it with rhetoric. If I dare to criticise a story that all the world admires it is because it seems

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to me that the Hebrew rhetorician appears for the first time in Job ; he hardly ever wins my sympathy, but I recognise him as a man of disordered genius who screams out everything that comes into his head, caring not at all for composition, or even for sequence in his phrases ; his intention is to coerce and to frighten, and if now and then he blasts out a striking phrase it is peradventure. And they that rewrote the Book of Job also wrote the Psalms. The method and the intention are the same—to coerce and to frighten. It is true that occasionally the Psalmist desired to sing something, but he never seems to have made up his mind clearly as to what he wanted to sing. He seems to have always preferred the roar of his heart's disquiet to composition, and it often happened to me to lay my Bible aside so that I might wonder more easily why the ordinary reader should like this literature better than any other. The ordinary reader demands some sort of sequence, and is not very liable to be taken by the beauty of a phrase. Nor

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can it be averred that an occasional beautiful phrase makes good literature. A gipsy following his mood on his fiddle may hit on a fine phrase, but he is not a great musician for that. My quarrel with all this literature is the absence of piano passages.

But the disquiet of the Psalmist is not difficult to understand. He lives in terror of a God, a jealous, revengeful God, always ready to destroy, a God that gave "his people also unto the sword and was wroth with his inheritance." The fire, we are told, "consumed their young men, and their maidens were not given in marriage; their priests fell by the sword, and their widows made no lamentation." And when all this was done, "the Lord waked as one out of sleep, and like a giant refreshed with wine he smote his enemies in the hinder parts and put them to a perpetual shame."

After Proverbs comes Ecclesiastes—a beautiful agnostic work in which God, for the first time in the Bible, seems to get the worst of it; he recedes into the

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background; over him, too, a fate seems to hang, and were it not for this book it might well be that I had not continued the Bible into Isaiah. And for all the profit I have gotten out of this prophet he might have been passed over. Almost at once did I begin to read that "the day of the Lord cometh to lay the land desolate and to destroy sinners out of it, that the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give light, and that the earth shall be removed out of her place in the wrath of the Lord of Hosts, and be chased as a roe, and as a sheep that no man taketh up;" and that every one that is found "shall be thrust through, and every one that is joined unto them shall fall by the sword, that their children also shall be dashed to pieces before their eyes, their houses shall be spoiled, and their wives ravished." Isaiah, like the Psalmist, always speaks at the top of his voice, "Moab shall howl for Moab; every one shall howl." "Pass ye over to Tarshish; howl, ye inhabitants of the isle." And he continues to howl without

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a single piano passage, until his howl is taken up by Jeremiah, whose howls are shriller than any in literature. Jeremiah howls in and out of season, until at last he is thrown into a well, and I confess that I despaired when he was drawn out of it, for I knew that he would continue his lamentations as before . . . and he did.

There are such beautiful things in Hebrew literature that it seems a pity we should not try to discriminate, and there is no excuse for not doing so, for Luther showed us the way when he said that the Book of Amos was not as worthy of our respect as many other parts of the Bible, and I was grateful to him for this criticism while glancing through the minor prophets; a scurrilous lot they seem to be, with very little literary ability amongst them; and yet one would not wish them out of the canon. They enforce the idea that made the Bible, alone among Oriental books, acceptable to Europeans. All the prophets, the greater and the lesser, are moralists; vulgar, uncouth if you will,

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but moralists in a sense that the Greeks were never ; and the commercial idea of Western Europe needed an explicit code, for the Bible and commerce go hand in hand, among Protestants as well as among Jews, and wherever the Catholic Church has become dominant and set itself above the Bible, and abolished the Bible, the industrial and commercial civilisation has decayed (Belgium excepted).

On finishing the Old Testament, before beginning the New, the reader stands, if I may borrow a simile from Keats, like a traveller on a peak in Darien, an ocean on either hand; oceans of storm and peace difficult to reconcile.

It is not possible that anybody in these islands could bring a virgin mind to the Bible, least of all to the Gospels, and my intellectual virginity was, after all, only relative. I had heard that everybody was agreed that the Gospel of John was merely an ecclesiastical work written about two centuries after the death of Christ ; and I had heard that Luke was the man of letters ; and having perforce to begin with

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one it seemed to me that I might as well begin with Luke as with another. I think I was disappointed almost from the first. A great weariness certainly overtook me about the middle of his narrative, and King Solomon's saying that "there is no end to the making of books" came up in my mind, and I said: "A polished, lifeless narrative written by a skilful man of letters, sleek as Maeterlinck;" for Maeterlinck is a very skilful and elaborate writer who knows how to burnish his prose, so that it shall seem like poetry to the ignorant. And what I miss in the Belgian I miss also in Luke—the essential. In Luke's narrative Christ seems a lifeless, waxen figure, daintily curled, with tinted cheeks, uttering pretty commonplaces gathered from *The Treasure of the Lowly* as he goes by. The Gospel of Matthew I liked a great deal better; Christ attains to some reality in it, despite a certain retouching of the text. "A canvas that has passed," I said, "through the hands of the restorer." The verses in which Christ gives Peter the keys of the king-

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dom of heaven, saying : "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven," are easily recognised by the critical mind as ecclesiastical paint. Remembering that I had heard somewhere, "Whosoever sins ye remit they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain they are retained," I turned up the passage in John, and could not help smiling at the deftness with which the ecclesiastical reviser had improved upon his predecessor; and the thought popped up that, while inditing this emendation, the writer of the fourth Gospel had had his eye on my poor country, for in Ireland purgatory yields richer dividends than any other commercial enterprise, whether brewery or distillery.

It was not until I turned to the Gospel of Mark that I caught a glimpse of the real Christ, the magnificent young heretic who came up from Galilee to overthrow

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the priests in Jerusalem. How far the story told by Mark is true in fact we shall never know, but it is certain that it is true upon paper. That excellent chronicler wrote with his eyes on the scenes he describes, though he may not have been an eye-witness to them; and his narrative reveals the same qualities that we admire in Maupassant. He is as concise, as explicit and as objective. I doubt if a story was ever better told; we get the legend (a legend is any story that has been passed from mouth to mouth, therefore a legend may be created in six days as well as in sixty years) in Mark in its folk simplicity, as it was related some sixty years after the Crucifixion. An admirable narrative without ecclesiastical introduction, the story beginning as the Frenchman would have begun it: John baptizing a great multitude in the Jordan, Jesus coming to him for baptism, which he receives, forthwith retiring into the desert, and coming out of it forty days after to preach in Galilee.

The narrative is strict throughout, and

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it seems to me the one Gospel of any historical value.

But it is not until we get to the Acts that we pass from legend into history—a marvellous narrative attributed to Luke, who, in my opinion, could not have written it; Mark was the one among the three who could. . . . If this prefatory note should fall into the hands of any of your learned German critics I will ask him to smile indulgently at the criticism of a man of letters who reads the Bible for the first time, and who, through no fault of his own, has been committed to record his impressions. But why should the fear of writing something silly or commonplace stay my pen? Who amongst us has not written something silly or commonplace? And who amongst us dares to say that he will never do so again? So, fortified by the example of my predecessors and contemporaries, I confess that on reading the Acts for the first time my ear was caught by a new voice, and it sounded so clearly out of the words that I could not

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doubt that Paul was speaking in person. It were impossible for any one else to catch an individual accent so completely as when Paul bids good-bye to his disciples and friends at Ephesus. In this beautiful farewell—one of the most moving and touching things in literature—Paul takes us to his bosom. Two thousand years cannot separate us; we become one with Paul, and glorify God in him.

These noble verses are not Paul's single contribution to the Acts, he is so evident in these narratives of adventure that it is difficult to imagine how they came to be attributed to Luke. The narrative of the shipwreck and the journey to Rome could only have been written by a man of literary genius, and there are never two at the same time. The trial at Cæsarea is Paul's own rendering of his defence. Of course it is. My pen pauses, for I must wonder how anyone could have entertained, even for a moment, the notion that Luke "made it up." How did he make it up? From hearsay? Blind men and deaf knowing nothing of the art of writing! Luke may have edited Paul's

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manuscripts, and his recension may be the Acts. An interesting question, no doubt ; but what concerns us more immediately is to see that Paul wrote the parts of the Acts that tell his own story.

A very wonderful figure he is in them, receiving the idea of his mission on the road to Damascus. Some attribute the manifestation of God in the heavens to the effect of sunstroke ; there are always prosaic people in the world, ready to attribute everything to a natural cause ; Don Quixote's revelation was attributed by his niece and his housewife and by the priest to a weakening in the Don's brain, aggravated by reading books on chivalry, and they thought to cure him of his folly by the burning of the books ; and Peter, without doubt, looked upon Paul as a very exaggerated person, but not having Sancho's faith and having received no promise of an island he remained behind, which is not to be regretted, for if he had followed Paul the Inquisition in Spain would not have allowed the publication of Don Quixote. The two stories

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differ, inasmuch as Paul set out without an esquire, tramping over Asia Minor very often alone ; sometimes with a disciple—Barnabas, Titus, Silas, or Timothy, preaching his Gospel of the Resurrection everywhere. And such a tale of adventure as Paul's the world had never heard before, such healings of the sick, such miracles ; nor must we forget that the narrative is beset with humorous adventures : such as the casting out of a spirit from the body of a girl of great value to her masters on account of her sooth-saying. For this he received blows and was cast into prison, and his feet made fast in the stocks. At Lystra he was stoned ; he received as many buffetings as Don Quixote, but these failed to subdue Paul, just as they failed to subdue the unabashed knight of La Mancha fifteen hundred years afterwards. Both are men of energy, courage, and attachment to an idea, and both inspire the same love in us, as is natural, for we love them for the same qualities.

In my walks Paul rises up before my eyes as clearly as the Knight of the

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Rueful Countenance, though no word depicting his personal appearance is given: a man of medium height, about five feet eight or nine, a round head covered with dark curly hair, a short neck, square shoulders, a long body, thick legs, with some belly under his girdle. His large luminous eyes often look into mine, and sometimes he appears with his shirt open, and there is a great shock of curled hair between his breasts, and his reddish hand goes there and he scratches as he talks; sometimes he pulls at his scanty beard petulantly. It is said that Paul stuttered, but he never stutters when he speaks to me. I say "when he speaks," but it would be more correct to say when he seems to speak, for if he spoke I should know whether he spoke to me in Greek or in English. He often seems as if about to speak, and sometimes I hear, or think I hear, but no syllables are sufficiently articulated for me to say what language he uses. When I read the Acts in the evening I do not see him so clearly as I do in my walks, yet when I lay down

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the book to meditate a presence seems to move among the shadows in the room beyond my dining-room.

We are now on the threshold of the Epistles, but before proceeding into them it will be well to look back, for we have come a long way. On opening the Bible we pass into a region of stories—desert stories, very beautiful folk-lore, known to the whole western world and admired by everybody; the story of Joseph and the story of Samson . . . but why enumerate? We pass into the zone of the Psalmists and the Prophets, where we find many beautiful phrases scattered through much that is incoherent and outrageous, and leaving the screaming multitude behind we pass into the calm and benedictive legends of the New Testament, and follow a beautiful and interesting figure through time's shadows and ecclesiastical varnishings, sometimes losing sight of him altogether in thick repaintings. As was said just now, the Acts carry us out of legend into history. In the Acts we meet for the first time a real man living the life of the

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flesh and of the world, and in the Acts we know this man in the circumstances of his life as well as we know Don Quixote's ; on opening the Epistles we meet him in all the fervour of his intellect and in all the caprices of his mind ; nature outdoes art ; she gives us in Paul the pure hero in the energy of his life and his intellect. We follow his mind in the Epistles sentence by sentence, in every devious circumlocution, understanding him for a while and then losing the thread of his discourse as he loses himself, growing confused, though all he wishes to say is in his heart. From superabundance of energy and desire of expression he fails to express himself. We get at Christianity in the Epistle to the Romans for the first time, the Pauline doctrine that Christ redeemed us from the law, and that it is in ourselves we must seek salvation and not in ritual. Peter, a pious Jew, could never understand Paul. In these two men Catholicism and Protestantism began together.

The Epistles of Paul are to me the most natural literature in the world, in

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none other do we hear the voice of a man so clearly ; the breath of the speaker is on our faces, and we catch sight of his eyes bent upon us. He is so human that he can even make theology interesting, and passing out of theology he talks to us about the very things we are debating to-day, what the newspapers call sex problems. It would seem to me that the sexes themselves have settled these problems long ago, but other men think differently, and talk incessantly on these subjects ; none as well as Paul in the Epistles. He starts on these interesting topics in the Epistle to the Romans, chapter seven, and being an early Christian he sets the virgin state above the married ; but it is better to marry, he says, than to burn. That is what is so fine in Paul, he always knew how to come to terms with life ; and he lives as intensely in his flesh as in his theology. A confession of sex is always winning ; we never know any one until he or she confesses his or her sex to us, and Paul confesses his in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians,

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but not because he wished to reveal himself for artistic purpose. Paul knew nothing of art except that which he wrote. He says, "Lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations there was given to me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from me, and he said unto me : 'My grace is sufficient for thee ; for my strength is made perfect in weakness.' Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

It may be doubted whether Paul always succeeded in subduing these infirmities of the flesh, but we would not love him less, even if we knew that he had loved St. Eunice not wisely but too well. Paul loved humanity more than any other man ; even the most obtuse reader cannot have failed to notice how winningly he desires at the end of every epistle to be remembered to his disciples and converts,

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the members of the churches he has founded. The churches he founded were often no more than a single family, perhaps one in a family was enough, and so he knew all his converts. The names of women occur frequently in the Epistles, and it is a refreshment to read of Julia, Priscilla, Phebe, Aquila, and the rest. He was beloved by women, as such a man would be, and many of them would have been glad to place their wealth at his disposal, but Paul only took money once, preferring to gain his living by the exercise of his trade.

But deeper even than the sex mystery is the mystery of Being ; we all ask some time if there is divinity and if we are related to the divine, no matter however remotely. This thought is more intense in us than any other thought, and everybody who has tried to write at all has tried to find utterance for it. The Psalmist often succeeds in expressing how transitory and how futile is the life of man, but it seems to me that Paul gets a little beyond our earthly life. He some-

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times flashes across his page perceptions that elude the words of every other writer, and so we see Paul in that mystical envelope in which every man lives his life. These moments come into the writings of Paul as they come into life itself, suddenly, unexpectedly amid the doctrine that he preaches, a doctrine as real to him as the clothes he wears, as the food he eats; but there is something behind the doctrine, something personal to himself, a noble pantheism, a sense of deity and his relation to it. He relied on the doctrine of the resurrection to make converts, but behind the resurrection was the great pantheism of the east, from which he could not escape, being eastern—if any man may escape it, whether he comes from the west or the east. “And they glorified God in me.” (Galatians 1, xxiv.) And then again in the second chapter, 20th verse, the natural pantheism of the man finds still more explicit expression: “I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless, I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by

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the faith of the Son of God who liveth in me and gave himself for me. I did not frustrate the grace of God, for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ has died in vain."

On the subject of Paul my pen could scratch on for ever, and if I pause it is to wonder if Paul has ever been seen by any man as clearly as he has been by me. A man of such original character as Paul, and who accomplished a work so extraordinary as the interpretation and foundation of Christianity must have inspired a thousand writers, and everything has been said without doubt; only, I don't know it. At most my knowledge of what the world thinks of Paul's art has been picked up from professors who have told me that his Greek is so bad that it is impossible for them to discuss him as a writer. This seems like putting the means before the result. "Why quarrel," I asked a professor, "with the means by which the most astonishing results in literature have been attained? Paul is as real as Hamlet, as Don Quixote, as Falstaff, yea, even as Jean

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Jacques Rousseau, who wrote hundreds of pages for the purpose of giving us a man in all his vices and imperfections." Yet my professors tell me that Paul's literature is unworthy of discussion because he did not write in the Attic idiom !

Among other friends, more literary and theological, I have heard it mentioned as strange that Paul should speak so little of his travels in the Epistles, and this criticism I have never been able to understand, except as a pretext for questioning the authenticity of the three great Epistles and for throwing them over like the others. Paul did not introduce into his Epistles any account of his wanderings, because he was addressing his friends on subjects nearer to his heart, and because he had some sense of literary decorum, though he was not a professional man of letters. A more pregnant criticism is one which I fancy must have been made many times before I make it to-day ; it is that Paul never seems to have thought it worth while to quote any of the beautiful sayings attributed to Christ, and to this criticism

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I have never heard a satisfactory reply. An ecclesiastic once answered me that the reason Paul did not quote Christ's words was that they were known to the people he went among. Christ's words could not have been known among the Gentiles and the people among whom Paul travelled as well as they are known in the Christian world to-day, yet we never cease from quoting them.

We are now in the heart of the mystery. How was it that Paul never spoke of these sayings and seems to have known nothing of the life of Christ but three things ; he mentions again and again that Christ was crucified and rose from the dead, and once he tells that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and said : "Take, eat ; this is my body which is broken for you, this do in remembrance of Me." And somewhere else I think Paul says, "He was betrayed in a garden." If I do not remember the Epistle in which the verse occurs—if it occurs—I remember very well how it

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startled me, and how I felt myself obliged to lay the book aside and go out to talk with somebody about Paul.

There are not many in Dublin interested in independent discussion ; there are Catholic and Protestant divines, but their ideas are stereotyped, and it was not to them I went, but to the National Library. There I should find a man of letters, John Eglinton, who is always interested in religious and literary questions, and knows how to listen. But in the midst of my criticisms and valiant guessings his face betrayed a certain inattention, and I asked him of what he was thinking. He answered that he had just been looking into a book which had come into the library, I think he said that very afternoon, a French work, the views of a certain doctor on the Crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. From the account we get of it in the Gospel narratives the doctor was inclined to think that it was some cataleptic swoon that Christ had suffered, and not death on the Cross. If this were so, his apparition in the garden to Mary Magdalen could be

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explained more or less satisfactorily, and his subsequent apparitions.

The idea was not new to me that Christ had not died on the cross ; a very old legend tells that he preached after the Crucifixion in India ; and I had read, too, that he had been supposed by many to be an Essene monk. "Why, then," I asked myself as I stood before John Eglinton, "should not Christ have returned to his monastery, having been cured of his wounds at the house of Joseph of Arimathea? Why should not Paul, after a day's preaching amid the Palestinian hills, have knocked at the door of that monastery? What a wonderful meeting that would have been!" A few days after I dictated the scenario which you have translated, and it seems to me that I have now told the story you asked for, my dear Meyerfeld ; and if my answer is long, and full of circumlocutions and divagations and Biblical criticism, I hope it will be pardoned for the sake of my portrait of Paul.

On looking again into your letter, I see that I have left another question un-

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answered—why I published the scenario—*i.e.*, the working notes which a writer makes for his convenience? The story of Christ and Paul meeting in an Essene monastery twenty-five years after the Crucifixion is a tempting one to tell after dinner; I told it many times and stories travel fast, and it was not long before I received proposals for collaboration from talented and honourable men. It was not fear of them that made me publish my scenario, but fear lest the story might drift so completely into the common consciousness that somebody would imagine he had invented it, and write it in a way that would cause me much unhappiness. You think, my dear friend, that it should be written by nobody. I have not forgotten your advice to me: “Let nothing tempt you to write it”; you said that it was an improvisation, like Liszt or Mozart,* adding that you always regarded

*“I cannot have said (or I must have been mad as a hatter when I said) that I always regarded Liszt and Mozart ‘rather as improvisatores than as composers.’ It seems to me utter trash. What I really said was:

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those two great men rather as improvisadores than as composers. The idea is suggestive, and if I had not already written many pages I should like to discuss the question with you, but as we are creatures, both of us, of time and space, I let it pass. And it may be that I shall take your advice, and it may be that I shall disregard it. To write the dialogue for the great men whom I love so dearly and with whom I seem to be so intimate will be a pleasure from which I shall not be able to refrain, when I have finished *Hail and Farewell*, and that will be . . . but who can put a term to the finishing of a book?

that in some of their compositions I still feel the charm of improvisation, that improvisation gives many of their pieces a special charm. But that is quite another thing. No one ever took greater pains (perhaps with the exception of George Moore) to re-write a melody than Mozart. Think of Don Juan's duet with Zerlina, which was re-written three times! Nevertheless, it has the effect of an improvisation by its spontaneity. That's where his art comes in." (Extract from a letter of Dr. Meyerfeld's to Mr. George Moore.)

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PERSONS IN THE PLAY

JESUS

MARY MAGDALEN

PAUL

THE PRIOR

MANAHEM

MATTHIAS

SADDUC

} *Essenes*

Scene—An Essene Monastery

ACT I

SCENE: *A large hall with windows at back overlooking distant hills turning blue in the twilight. The River Jordan glitters in the distance. We are in an Essene monastery situated among the Palestinian hills.*

It was the practice among the Essenes that an elder monk should read the Scripture and interpret obscure or difficult passages. We gather from the talk between two monks, Manahem and Sadduc, who enter, that they have left their brethren still engaged in disputation. "May we," asks Manahem, "regard the passages in Scripture in which God is described with human attributes as allegorical?"

It would seem from Sadduc's answer that the interpreter, Matthias, has carried his interpretation further than the brethren like, and that he is suspected of being tainted with Greek philosophy. Manahem presses Sadduc into an admission that some

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explanation is necessary, for there are many passages in Scripture which conflict with the beliefs of the Essenes.

MANAHEM. All among us hold that Deity is the cause of good; but evil we see everywhere when we look beyond our doors. Therefore it must be that the world has been created by good and bad angels.

SADDUC. Was Lilith among the evil angels—she that fled from Adam and would not return to him when the angel of the Lord, Gabriel, went in search of her and found her flying over the sea?

MANAHEM. An evil angel, certainly, for it was jealousy of Eve that brought her round the garden in the shape of a serpent, which she had borrowed from Lucifer on a promise of love, so that she might tempt Eve to disobey the Lord's covenant.

SADDUC. But Matthias holds the garden of Eden to be no more than a parable.

MANAHEM. A parable it must be in some measure, since we are told that Adam sought to hide himself from God among

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the trees in the garden. None can hide himself from God. So it would seem, therefore, that the garden meant the mind of man as an individual, and that he who is escaping from God flees from himself, for our lives are swayed between two powers, the mind of the universe which is God and the separate mind of the individual.

SADDUC. The Scripture, then, wastes into thin imagery and the dreams of each one of us.

MANAHEM. But, Sadduc, thou wouldst not hold that God has hands and feet, that God is angry, revengeful, or that God could repent of having created man, for were this so God would be finite rather than an infinite Being, and be the God of the Hebrews only.

SADDUC. Of his chosen people, we must hold by that. But all the world, all the stars, all the eye sees and the ear hears, are the works of God.

Manahem cites Scripture to this effect:
“That God is not a man.” (Numbers

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23, xix.) And then Sadduc cites the passage Deuteronomy 1, xxxi, "That God bear thee as a man doth bear his son." Whereupon Manahem declares that the second is introduced for the instruction of the mass of mankind, and not because God is such in his real nature; in other words, when Scripture speaks of God as if he were man and attributes to him the acts and motives of men, it is by way of accommodation to the wants of those who are intellectually and morally at a low stage of culture; but for those who have passed beyond this stage, whose intelligence is not limited to their imagination, and whose will is not governed by selfish fears and hopes, there is another lesson. They can rise to the consciousness of God as the absolute Being, to whom none of the attributes of finite things or beings can belong, not even those of humanity. Of this Being we know only that he is and not what he is; and this is what is meant when God is spoken of by the name, "I am that I am."

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Matthias enters on the words “ of this Being,” and he stands on the threshold listening. On the conclusion of Manahem’s speech, he comes forward saying that he agrees with Manahem in as much as that it would not only be against the word of Scripture, but against all tradition to accept God as being no more than the absolute substance which, strictly taken, would exclude all difference and relation, even the difference and relation of subject and object in self-consciousness. He holds to the idea of an absolute God, pure, simple, and self-subsistent.

MANAHEM. Yet it is hard to conceive of God except as a principle of being and well-being in the universe, who binds all things to each other in binding them to himself.

SADDUC. Then there are two Gods and not one God.

MANAHEM. Not two Gods but two aspects.

SADDUC. Which must be reduced to unity.

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A MONK. There is God and there is the word of God, logos.

Enter the Prior.

PRIOR. There is only one God, who watches over his people, Jehovah, and he has chosen them, and he watches over all the other nations of the earth.

A MONK. And he loves them too.

PRIOR. So far I am with thee ; but it is through the Hebrew people, and through them to all mankind on condition of their obedience to his revealed will.

The words of the Prior have caused the monks to cease chattering (the stage is already filled with twelve or thirteen monks), and their attention is turned to a lay brother who has just come in carrying a basket on his arm.

JESUS. How beautiful is the evening light as it dies revealing every crest ; the outline of the hills is evident now, evident as the will of God.

MATTHIAS. Hear ye all ! This lay brother expresses in his dream, uncon-

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scious, the very point that I laboured to explain to you. You have heard him. Evident as the will of God, he says.

SADDUC. The world is God's will ; we must separate God's will from his nature ; so far do we go with thee.

MANAHEM. By the aid of angels, therefore, God created the world, and evil angels were among the good.

MATTHIAS. Forget the angels, good and evil, so that we may ponder on that which even now ravishes the soul of our brother ; a humble hewer of wood, a drawer of water, a server of the community. But what has our brother in his basket ?

JESUS. Crumbs fallen from the table. I must go out and feed my birds. Behold them assembled, waiting. We have fed and it behoves us to feed them.

He passes out into the open air. The doves flutter round him, lighting on his shoulder, and he stands feeding them.

MANAHEM. But if I understand thee rightly, Matthias, when the Scripture says the Heavens were created before the

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earth, the meaning is that intelligence is prior to sense.

MATTHIAS. Heaven is our intelligence and the earth our sensibility. After all the other creatures, man, as Moses said, was made in the image and likeness of God ; saying well, for nothing born on earth has more resemblance to God than man; not indeed in the characteristics of his body, for God has no outward form, but in the intelligence which has supremacy in his soul. For the intelligence that exists in each individual is made after the pattern of the intelligence of the universe as its archetype, being in some sort the God of the body, which carries it about like an image in a shrine. Thus the intelligence occupies the same place in man, as the Great Governor occupies in the universe—being itself invisible while it sees everything, and having its own essence hidden while it penetrates to the essences of all other things. Also by its arts and sciences, it makes for itself open roads through all the earth and the seas, and searches out everything that is contained in them.

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And then again it rises on wings, and looking down upon the air and all its commotions it is borne upwards to the sky and the revolving heavens, and accompanies the choral dance of the planets and stars fixed according to the laws of music. And being led by love, the guide of wisdom, it proceeds still onwards, till it transcends all that is capable of being apprehended by the senses and rises to that which is perceptible only by the intellect. And there, seeing in their surpassing beauty the original ideas and archetypes of all the things which sense finds beautiful, it becomes possessed by a sober intoxication, like the Corybantic revellers, and is filled with a still stronger longing, which bears it up to the highest summit of the intelligible world till it seems to approach to the great king of the intelligible world himself. And, while it is eagerly seeking to behold him in all his glory, rays of divine light are poured forth upon it, which by their exceeding brilliance dazzle the eyes of the intelligence.

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At the end of this speech Jesus enters, followed by the birds ; and he has some difficulty in preventing them from following him into the room. Manahem regrets that Jesus went to feed the birds while Matthias was speaking on the intelligence of man, telling how near it may approach to the great king of the intelligible world himself. Jesus answers that he is sure that Matthias has spoken well for his own edification, and for the edification of others who desire to rise as if on wings and understand the things which are not those of this world ; but there are other means perhaps more efficient than the understanding. Thereupon the Prior urges Jesus to speak, for, while speaking, Jesus has withdrawn himself somewhat as if he were averse from the culture which surrounds him. But he is persuaded to speak again, and he tells how in the morning, as he was washing clothes in the Jordan, all consciousness of his work faded from him, and by merely looking at the glory of the sky behind the mountains he seemed

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to understand all the secrets of the earth and the heavens.

JESUS. But as I awoke the knowledge acquired in the vision faded from me. Nathless I was happy all the morning while washing the clothes which the brethren of our Order wear, and which it is my duty to purify for them.

The Prior asks him to tell of his afternoon's work and that of the brothers who went with him.

JESUS. Some of us went to reap in the fields; others—and I amongst them—went to watch the flocks and herds feeding, and all the day went by in changing them from pasture to pasture.

The fulfilment of the simple duties of life the lay brother seems to think as meeting all the obligations of the law. And when asked if the time passed slowly or quickly, or if he had seen anybody during the hours of the day, he tells of a

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preacher whom he had seen exhorting an unwilling multitude.

MANAHEM. Wouldst thou say it is not well for men to preach?

JESUS. I would say nothing, giving no orders to other men, for the divine order is implanted in the heart, and every man knoweth what is best for him to do. To go forth at dawn to thy work and to take joy in it, and to forget thy work in the beauty of the sunrise, and to remember it and to continue it in remembrance of the light that dawneth for all men. So do our days go by and we should be content with them.

Jesus passes away from the Prior, pleading that the wood-shed is unfilled with faggots. Discussion begins again among the monks, but when the sun dips below the crests of the hills silence falls upon them; the hour has come for everybody to retire to his cell. And the monks go out singing an evening hymn. As soon as the stage is empty Manahem and Sadduc

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begin again to discuss some theological point, unmindful of Jesus, who enters with faggots, and builds up a fire for them after saying that with sunset the nights grow cold. As soon as this is done he excuses himself for again interrupting their talk, but he would wish to know if the hour has come for barring the door of the monastery. It is not likely that any traveller will ask for shelter that night. But if one should come there will be a bed in that corner to offer him. The monks themselves would prefer the place by the fire. Jesus does not argue with them, but bars the door of the monastery and returns to the fire to look to it. When he has done this he lays himself down in an obscure corner of the room.

A moment after a knock is heard at the door. Jesus rises at once to open it, and a thick-set man, of rugged appearance, hairy in the face and with a belly, staggers into the room, asking if he may have food and shelter for the night. Manahem asks Jesus to fetch him food, and he and Sadduc continue to talk about angels, heedless

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of their guest who, notwithstanding his great fatigue, awakens gradually from his lethargy and begins to listen.

PAUL. I see that ye are still set on old readings of Scriptures and traditions of our fathers ; so I say unto you, beware of the worship of angels, for no man hath seen angels, and they are often but the puffings up of the fleshly mind. And beware, I say unto you, of voluntary humility, and take courage and turn to Christ, the one Mediator.

MANAHEM. This man can be none other than the preacher whom Jesus heard to-day by the Jordan.

SADDUC. Hearest how he warns us against angels ?

PAUL. Yea, against angels, philosophy and vain deceit, and the traditions of men, lest they spoil your inheritance.

MANAHEM. But thou speakest against the Scriptures ?

PAUL. Not against the Scriptures. God forbid ! But ye would know of Christ Jesus our Lord ?

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SADDUC. We would hear first about thyself, who thou art.

PAUL. "Who am I?" thou askest. Paul of Tarsus. (*He sinks back on the couch. Manahem and Sadduc stand watching him for some moments. Paul opens his eyes; he speaks like one in sleep.*) Ye would know whence I have come? From Cæsarea, granted liberty by Felix, the Roman pro-Consul, whose prisoner I am, to preach where the Lord guideth me until the time cometh for the ship to take me to Rome.

MANAHEM. To Rome!

PAUL. Yea, to Rome, for I have appealed to Cæsar.

SADDUC. Art thou a Roman?

PAUL. A freeman of Tarsus, a city of Cilicia, and no mean one.

MANAHEM (*to Sadduc*). Only with a great sum can this freedom be obtained.

PAUL. Not with money, for I have none. I was free-born.

SADDUC. An uncircumcised! Come to preach among these hills! And to Jews!

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PAUL. Not so. A Hebrew like yourselves, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Pharisee.

SADDUC. If so, what wouldst thou preach to us? We know the law of Moses and obey it.

PAUL. I preach to Jew and Gentile alike, for there is but one God for all. But the Gentiles' ears are not closed as the Jews'. A stiff-necked race, uncircumcised in the heart and ears, resisting the Holy Ghost as their fathers have done. Which of the prophets have ye not persecuted? And which of them have ye not slain who told of the coming of the Lord? Of whom have ye not been betrayers and murderers? Myself was among the cruellest of the persecutors of the Nazarene, one that stood among the crowd of Jews that stoned Stephen and shared his garments. But it came to pass that the Lord should call me. Why me more than another? Who shall know the ways of the Lord or look into his wisdom? But I was called on my way to Damascus, whither I went to persecute the saints. A great light shone

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round about me, and I fell unto the ground and heard a voice saying unto me : "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" And I answered : "Who art thou, Lord?" And He said unto me : "I am Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutest."

MANAHEM. And those that were with thee, saw they too the light?

PAUL. They saw the light but they heard not the voice that spake to me. And I said : "What shall I do, Lord?" And the Lord said unto me : "Arise and go into Damascus, and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do."

Jesus enters interrupting the narrative, bringing with him a basin of water, sponges and towels and a change of garment, and he asks Paul if he will allow him to bathe his feet. Jesus bathes Paul's feet and wipes them, relieves him of his garment and gives him a pure linen gown to wear.

PAUL. And thou, too, hast thou not heard of the Christ risen?

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JESUS. I know not of what thou speakest.

PAUL. Yet the whole world is now following Christ, save the Jews of Jerusalem and of the hills about Jerusalem. To-day I was preaching by the Jordan. Where wert thou?

JESUS. I was following my flock.

PAUL. And thy brethren?

JESUS. Some were in the fields, some in the vineyards.

PAUL. Thy face is not unstrange to me, yet I have never been among these hills before. . . . But I can talk no more, not having eaten since daybreak.

JESUS. I go to fetch meat for thee.

Exit Jesus.

MANAHEM. But we thought that thou wert Hebrew like ourselves.

PAUL. Even so as yourselves.

SADDUC. Why, then, tell us that thou art preaching the resurrection, and that all men have turned from Jehovah to follow Christ?

PAUL. No, not turned from Jehovah, but from the law. Christ has redeemed us from

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the death of the law. For the law is a tree, and dead is every one that hangeth from a tree.

MANAHEM. But who is this Christ of whom thou speakest, and by what right does he abolish the law of Moses?

PAUL. All day have I journeyed, and on foot, and to-night more than ever am I contemptible of speech. Many read the Scriptures through a veil, but when the veil is done away with in Christ . . .

Paul falls back overcome with fatigue.

MANAHEM. We will hear thee tell to-morrow of the vision that stopped thee on the road to Damascus, and the Christ that spake to thee out of the clouds.

PAUL. God sent forth his Son born of woman under the law to redeem them that were under the law. To-morrow ye shall hear of these things, though it was Peter that was to preach to the circumcised, and ye are Jews. Ye shall hear from me of the Son of God risen from the dead.

MANAHEM. By the Son of God he means logos. But risen from the dead ! How are we to understand his words ?

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PAUL. That God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, and myself an ambassador for Christ—Christ who is the image of God, died for us on Mount Calvary and was raised from the dead by the Father after the third day.

Jesus brings in the evening meal and lays it before Paul, and Paul eats, saying that to-morrow he will tell them again that Christ has risen from the dead.

ACT II

SCENE : *The same hall. Soon after day-break Manahem and Sadduc enter and look round seeking their guest.*

MANAHEM. We left him sleeping.

SADDUC. That was an hour ago, and he may have left us. He is one that has lost his wits from too much travelling, and it would not be like him to tarry while the day is fresh.

MANAHEM. One of those in whom the mind is as restless as the feet ; his thoughts and his feet go to the same hurried psalm. But I would have heard him further.

SADDUC. A mind at ramble always.

MANAHEM. But he would not have gone before leave-taking, wild traveller though he be. (*Manahem goes to window.*) Our lay brother has led him to the river's brink for purification. And now they are coming hither ; our guest in front, our brother walking behind, carrying the

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drying linen and the sponges of ablutions. So he must be, as he declares himself, a Hebrew. Yet what strange doctrines he preaches !

Enter Paul and Jesus. Manahem and Paul are left alone.

Manahem tells Paul of the simple life of the brothers, strictly regulated ; each one having his own work during the week, some looking after the fields, the garden, the cattle, or working at manual labour to satisfy their simple needs. Those who have power as soothsayers and wonder-healers are permitted to go forth among the people who desire their help or their counsel. Their life is communal, no brother retaining any property and all money going into the common stock. The Prior joins them, and he continues to tell Paul about the Essene brotherhood.

PRIOR. The love of God demands the purity of the whole life, including the physical, and freedom from all deception. The love of God demands belief in the

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beneficent providence of God, the cause of all good ; nothing evil proceeds from God.

PAUL. All thou sayest is well enough. Yet living here as ye do within thirty leagues of Jerusalem, it is strange that no apostle has brought you the joyful tidings that Christ's death has made void the law.

PRIOR. We find thy meaning hard to understand, for how could any death make void the law of Moses to Jews like ourselves, or to a Jew like thee? For thou speakest to us in our own tongue ; thou must needs be a Jew.

PAUL. None more a Jew than I, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Pharisee, and a persecutor of the saints until God, that separated me from my mother's womb, called me by his grace to reveal his son in me, and that I might preach the gospel to the heathen. (*To Sadduc and Manahem.*) Yesterday I told thee how on my way to Damascus I heard a voice speaking to me out of a great brightness, saying: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"

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SADDUC (*to the brethren*). He tells a strange story. Listen to him. (*To Paul.*) As thou wast about to tell of them whom thou now callest the saints, our lay brother came with water to bathe thy feet.

PAUL. I had asked for letters from the Chief Scribe that I might bring the Nazarenes bound to Jerusalem. I had stood by while Stephen was stoned, and had ruined and wasted all that preached against the law, Jew that I am, and Pharisee, but, as I have said, God called me to preach. The miracle on the road to Damascus was a manifestation of God's will towards me, that I should become his apostle. My sight was taken from me for three days, and when the Jews in the city heard of my conversion they gathered together to slay me, but I was let down in a basket from a window, and passed into Arabia, but thereafter I returned speedily to Damascus. And after three years I went to Jerusalem and saw Peter, the Apostle of the circumcised.

SADDUC (*to Manahem*). But may there then be an apostle of the unclean?

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PAUL. Not unclean are the Gentiles, inasmuch as they are according to nature. Yea, verily I say unto you that there may be and must be an apostle of the Gentiles, for Jews and Gentiles have sinned alike, and Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and the promise was that all should be saved. Ye murmur among yourselves, having forgotten that the Scriptures tell us how that God said to Abraham, "in thee all men shall be blessed," foreseeing that he would justify the heathen through faith. As I speak to you to-day so did I speak to Peter, and withstood him face to face, for he was to be blamed. For he was eating among the Gentiles, but separated from them when certain came from Jerusalem—he fearing the reproach of the circumcised—and other Jews dissembled likewise with him, and among them was Barnabas. When I saw they walked not uprightly, according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all: "If thou being a Jew livest after the manner of the Gentiles, and not as the Jews, why compellest

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thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? And what does this circumcision avail thee if thou break the law, for he is not Jew which is one outwardly in the flesh, but he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is of the heart and of the spirit and not of the letter.” But Peter, though the first among the apostles, remaineth a Jew in his nature, only Christian in understanding, doubtful yet that Christ was sent to free the Jews from the bondage of the law, and he would retain the law yet from habit and custom, even as ye yourselves, wherefore I said to him: “Do thou preach to the Jews, they will hear thee more willingly than they will me, and I will go among the Gentiles.”

MATTHIAS. May I interpret thy teaching that I may understand it more readily? Since men have been reborn in Christ they are dead to the law, as a woman’s husband in the grave is dead to her that liveth.

PAUL. Those are my own words that I spake in preaching to the Galatians. The law is but a schoolmaster that has led us by the hand.

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MATTHIAS. Thy teaching is that truth grows as the child, as the plant, as all things that we see.

PAUL. Truth groweth not but truth becomes apparent, and what was true to the heir is not true to the master. There was the law of Moses and now there is the law of Christ, that prevaieth, world without end, till the last enemy be conquered, even death, and a mediator be needed no more, and Christ himself be united to his father. And this law was not taught to me by man, but is a direct revelation from God.

MATTHIAS. But tell us, explain the law to us. Charity we practise here, and love of one another, and our days are spent in disputations of the Scriptures, but——

PAUL. It profiteth a man nothing if he love not his brother, but disputation is vain; without faith in Jesus Christ good deeds are but stumbling blocks.

MATTHIAS. But this faith thou speakest of, how cometh it to a man if he read not the Scriptures, learning to discern the truth therein?

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PAUL. Faith comes to us through grace, and grace is a gift from God, and this is according to Scripture, for did not God say unto Moses: "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

MATTHIAS. But thou holdest that the law of Moses ended with the coming of Christ, who died on the cross that our sins might be forgiven us; and we were re-proved as laggards in tradition and among the rudiments of the world; but we hear now from thy lips that God is like man—a parcel of moods and obedient to them.

He turns to his brethren to see if he has their approval.

PAUL. Nay, but who art thou, O man, that replyest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, "why hast thou made me thus?" Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour?

MATTHIAS. Among the rudiments of the mind it is of a surety to think of God

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as a potter. To rise to any idea of God we must discard human attribute after human attribute, peeling mortality away till we arrive at the divine kernel.

PAUL. When I was at Athens the Greeks answered me as thou answerest. Greece and Egypt swarm with men like thee seeking after wisdom, but I say unto thee that the wisdom thou seekest is foolishness in God's sight.

MATTHIAS. Against thy stern and zealous affirmation logic breaks like arrows shot against a cliff.

He goes up the stage, taking farewell of the Prior first, Manahem and Sadduc, and afterwards of the other monks standing about the doorway. The monks follow him out; Manahem and Sadduc come down the stage to Paul.

MANAHEM. He leaveth now for Alexandria. Thou didst guess rightly. Matthias is a Jew from Alexandria, possessed of the learning of all the schools; but he holds fast by the law, and in telling of this Christ thou——

SADDUC. We would hear of Peter that was

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the first to cast his net aside that he might follow Christ, but whom thou didst find eating unclean meat among the Gentiles.

PAUL. Aye, and who denied Christ three times, but yet was the first to whom the Lord came after he had risen from the dead. Who afterwards appeared to the twelve and to five hundred others, some of whom are laid asleep, but many still live.

MANAHEM. But this Christ?

PAUL. Son of the living God, that took on the beggarly raiment of human flesh at Nazareth, was baptized by John in the Jordan, thereafter preached in Galilee, went up to Jerusalem, and, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, was crucified by order of Pilate between two thieves on Mount Calvary; the third day he rose from the dead that our sins——

MANAHEM. But our brother yonder (*Jesus is seen at the back feeding the birds*) bore a cross to Calvary, and was crucified by the order of Pilate.

PAUL. Pilate condemned many men, a cruel man even among the Romans. Where is the brother of whom thou speakest?

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PRIOR. Manahem did wrong to speak to thee of these things. Once a man enters these doors his past is dead to him and to his brethren here. I would not have thee speak with our brother and disturb his happiness with questions; he is at peace with himself, and only now and then a memory of Calvary rises and passes by like an unwelcome wind. Thou camest last night asking for food and shelter; our charity has not been withheld from thee; we have listened to thee with courtesy and with interest, but will now return to our daily duties and to our consciences.

Paul passes towards the door, and so absorbed is he in his thoughts that he does not see Jesus, who entered the moment before; but on the threshold he is brought back by a sudden remembrance, and returns to thank the lay brother for his kindness in washing his feet the night before, and bringing him to the bath in the morning, and for the linen that he provided him with and for the many other kindnesses.

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PAUL (*looking into Jesus' face, and speaking from a sudden impulse*). Last night, while thou didst wash my feet, I asked if thou hadst heard of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ spoken of in Nazareth.

JESUS. It is many years since I have been in Nazareth.

PAUL. Nor wouldst thou care, any more than thy learned brethren, to hear of this miracle accomplished that all men may be saved ?

JESUS. Every man dieth every day and is born again ; the miracle is about us, and the performance of the duties that our hearts utter to us is enough. Till the call came to go to Jerusalem to preach I drove the cattle from pasture to pasture, as I did to-day, nor deemed that I could better live my life.

PAUL. So thou too didst preach in Jerusalem twenty years ago ? More strange it is, then, that thou didst not hear of Jesus of Nazareth that was baptised by John in the Jordan, preached in Galilee, and was crucified by order of Pilate on Calvary between two thieves.

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JESUS. All that thou speakest befell me.

PAUL. Jesus thy name, and thou comest from Nazareth, for all I know——

JESUS. Was betrayed in a garden, scourged at a pillar, and crowned with a wreath of thorns. I was laid in the tomb.

PAUL. Blaspheme not!

Taking Jesus' hands he looks at them and finds the marks of the nails, and looking upon his brow he finds traces of where the crown of thorns had been placed; so he is taken by a great fear and raves incoherently and dashes about and seems to lose his senses, and would strike Christ down, but at that moment falls on to a seat overcome. Waking from his swoon he gives an account of his journeys, how he wandered from city to city preaching.

PAUL. Of the Jews five times I received forty stripes save one; thrice was I beaten with rods, once I was stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a day and a night I have been in the deep. In journeying often in perils of water, in perils of robbery, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils of false brethren;

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in weariness, in painfulness, in watching often, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness. But why do I tell of these things? Of what account may they be to you Jews, inveterate in traditions and the law, or else puffed up with the wisdom of the Greeks? Or to thee, that makest a mock of Christ Jesus our Lord, that darest declare thyself Son of the living God.

JESUS. As much as I am are not ye all sons of the living God? Turn not we in distress alike to our Father which is in heaven, and pray to him that the cup may pass from us. And alike are we not obedient to our fleshly parents, receiving from them our daily bread. My father was Joseph and Mary my mother, a carpenter and his wife in Nazareth. My brother James still lives in Jerusalem, and may have spoken to thee of me, though he never approved of his brother.

PAUL. It was to meet James, the brother of the Lord, that I went to Jerusalem this last time, hoping that with

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his help the Jews might be brought to accept the truth that there was but one salvation for all men—faith in Jesus Christ. Thou didst say thy brother ! I will bring him here, and he will deny thee to thy face.

JESUS. Has he not done so before ? It matters not to remember these things.

PAUL. A new trial thou dost send, Lord, to approve my faith ; not yet it would seem sufficiently proven. I will stand steadfast. But I would fain have gone to Rome untroubled. Lord, give me faith, and let not thy servant be deceived by the visible world, but led as heretofore by the spirit. (*To Jesus.*) Hide thy blasphemous hands and feet from me ! Wouldst show me a lance-pierced side ?

JESUS. If thou wouldst see it.

PAUL. The spirit lusteth for the flesh and the flesh for the spirit.

PRIOR. His words have lost all sense, and he raves like one possessed by an evil spirit. And our pale brother shrinks before his violence. Why callest thou our

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brother blasphemers? Because he died not on the cross?

PAUL. Jesus of Nazareth died on the cross on Calvary, and three days after was raised from the dead by the glory of his Father in heaven, and if this be not so the world still is thrall to sin, and we have preached falsely. But out of false preaching come not peace and love and purity of life, love of one another and redemption from sin, and therefore my preaching is truth, and Christ rose from the dead that men might be saved. I have seen many miracles and have wrought many by the grace of God, and now I see one wrought by the power of Satan. Why not? A last time the evil one puts forth his power to blight and ruin God's harvest. What though we be of diverse opinion in many things, yet at the least are we all Jews together, and I beseech you to look well into this man that I find amongst you, who has come here to deceive with false signs upon him. And this I will prove and abundantly with witnesses from Jerusalem. An appearance, a fetch come hither with

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marks of nails on feet and hands. Witchcraft I declare it, or the work of evil angels. But be not deceived, O foolish Jews—his story shall be examined by witnesses and I go to fetch them.

Paul hurries out and the monks crowd round the doorway and watch him hastening across the plain.

JESUS. Mine enemies will appear in everydoor way at his coming.

PRIOR. I would speak alone with our brother.

The monks go out and Jesus turns to the Prior.

JESUS. And he has gone to fetch witnesses to prove to myself that I am but a blasphemer, and that Jesus of Nazareth rose from the dead and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father. And he will return speedily. Now I shall be taken forth, crowned with thorns and hung upon a cross again. Once I begged our Father which is in heaven to let this trial pass from me, but it was not decreed that it should pass, I suffered. But am I to be crucified anew?

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PRIOR. But, my son, we shall keep thee here, and none shall come to take thee away from us. Fear nothing, fear nothing: thou art safe here, brother, safe from an evil world.

ACT III

SCENE : *The same hall. Dusk before daybreak.*

As the sun rises the monks come in singing a morning hymn, and the Prior tells out the daily work : some are bidden to go to heal the sick, others to the fields where the crops are ripe, others to the plain and hillside with the flocks. It is the turn of others to remain in their cells reading the Scriptures.

MONK. I know not whither to lead the flocks, father, for I have sown and reaped this many a day.

SECOND MONK. And my work has been the milking of ewes and butter-making and cheese-making. How shall I—— ?

PRIOR. Other work comes to thy share to-day.

FIRST MONK. Will not Jesus tell us where there is pasture on the plain for the sheep ?

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SECOND MONK. The goat will not answer to my pipe.

MANAHEM. Jesus has bidden me give thee his.

SECOND MONK. Canst thou play it, brother?

The monk begins to play; the monks beyond the doorway begin to sing. All go out, leaving the Prior with Manahem and Sadduc.

SADDUC. These brothers are but poor shepherds, and our flocks will dwindle if Jesus be taken from them.

PRIOR. But he must be hidden from Paul and from them that Paul will bring from Jerusalem. (*To Manahem.*) Hast thou spoken with him this morning?

MANAHEM. No, for he is still praying.

SADDUC. All night he has prayed, crying to his Father in heaven that the cup might pass from him.

PRIOR. Meaning thereby that he may not be dragged into the trouble of life, which he quitted for ever when he returned to us again after crucifixion, having escaped death, none knows how, bereft of

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all memory of his sufferings, the simplest heart amongst us, content with his daily lot from dusk to dusk, and then sleeping that he may be rested enough to begin the same tasks again.

MANAHEM. Nothing but a dream ruffling now and then the simple content of his life.

SADDUC. And of a surety he knows not whether it be a memory from the past or a dream that vexes him.

PRIOR. I, too, have seen him in those moments striving with himself, but the dispensation of the years was merciful, and he had nigh forgotten when this man Paul came and awakened his memories again.

SADDUC. A pestilent fellow, a begetter of heresies and sedition ; one that runneth mad since his vision on the road to Damascus.

MANAHEM. And now one that runneth back from Jerusalem, or one that may be will never return, here or elsewhere.

PRIOR. Here or elsewhere? What meanest thou, Manahem?

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SADDUC. Manahem reckons that when within sight of the walls of the city fear will overtake him and he will return hither, or that if he enters the city the Jews of Jerusalem will save us further trouble.

PRIOR. Let us not think that so would be the better ; but our duty is to save our brother from further persecution, and lest this man should come upon us unawares go thou, Sadduc, and keep watch.

SADDUC. I go, father. And, Manahem, do thou tell our father the stories that Paul told on the night of his arrival.

Exit Sadduc.

MANAHEM. On the night of his arrival, even before his feet were washed and a change of raiment given to him, he did rebuke us for that we were arguing upon angels, and according to him there is no mediator between God and man but him whom he calls Christ. We asked him of whom he spake, but overcome with fatigue he fell back, saying that he would tell us of Jesus of Nazareth in the morning. He could not wait for morning to come, but awoke us in the night and spake to us for

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a long while about the Son of God that was raised by the glory of his Father from the dead, in whom is all salvation, or so sayeth this Paul. He spake of faith and of grace, but we were too tired to listen to him, and in our dreams we heard him walking to and fro.

PRIOR. A strange fellow, truly !

MANAHEM. It was at Miletus, he told us, that he was bidden through the spirit to get himself to Jerusalem by the day of Pentecost, for he still hoped to bring Jews and Gentiles into one faith. In Jerusalem there were Jews of his thinking, and they bade him take four men and purify himself with them in the temple, and by conforming to the law he might draw the Jews to listen to him ; but the Jews stirred up the people against him, crying that he had brought Greeks into the temple and had polluted the holy place, and all the city was moved and the people ran together. And they were about to kill him when tidings came to the chief captain of the guard that all Jerusalem was in uproar, wherefore the Romans carried him

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in chains to the castle to be examined by scourging, that the chief captain might know wherefore the people had cried out against him. But as they bound him he asked the centurion if it were lawful for him to scourge a Roman uncondemned; and the chief captain asked if he were indeed a Roman, and Paul told him he was of Tarsus and born free. Whereupon, his tale runs, the captain was filled with fear in that he had bound a Roman, and he sent him to Cæsarea to be tried before Felix and Agrippa. There the scribes bore testimony against him, but he defended himself, and Felix and Agrippa found no fault with him, and would have set him free to go whither he listed. But obedient to his troublesome spirit, he said: "I will appeal to Cæsar." Wherefore no man knows. And now they are at trouble to send him to Rome.

PRIOR. A troublesome, turbulent fellow that will give as much vexation in Rome as in Judea. A punishment the Lord has sent upon Rome, for that he would deliver his people from bondage. (*Enter Jesus*

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with his staff in his hand and his scrip upon his shoulders.) Thou comest, brother, as if apparelled for a journey.

JESUS. For a journey, yea, and to Jerusalem, whither I must needs go again. But I have come to ask leave of thee.

PRIOR. To go to Jerusalem to confute this man! But, Jesus, our brother, abide here with us, and my promise to thee shall not be broken. None shall drag thee into the trouble of life again. Hast thou forgotten?

JESUS. Nothing is forgotten. Last night memory returned to me, and we were young again together, thou and I. Thou rememberest, father, how I was bidden by the Spirit to leave you here, and the long discussion with the brethren? But the Spirit within me was strong to go, and I went, and thou didst come with me some part of the way.

PRIOR. Trying to dissuade thee, but thy young heart was filled with belief that the kingdom of God was upon us; and that those who would share must prepare for it by prayer and penitence. I

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see thee still going from me across the landscape, and myself straining my eyes after thee . . . for I loved thee always, Jesus.

JESUS. Father, I must go again ; last night I prayed that it might not be so, but the voice spake strongly within me. Still, father, I would ask thy leave, and make not the cup bitterer by refusing it to me.

Enter Sadduc.

SADDUC. This fellow Paul has returned to us. He sends greetings and asks to see thee.

PRIOR. Has he brought witnesses ?

SADDUC. None do I see with him.

PRIOR. Then let him begone.

JESUS. Father, I would entreat thee to see him.

PRIOR. Not since he cometh without witnesses.

JESUS. If he have brought no witnesses he will tell us why he has failed to find them.

PRIOR. Dear brother Jesus, I would that thou didst not see him again. He

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troubles all whom he meets, but I am loth to deny thee if thou asketh.

JESUS. Father, I ask thee to see Paul, and for a reason.

The Prior signs to Sadduc. A moment after Paul enters with signs of great weariness upon him.

PRIOR. Thou hast made a speedy journey. We deemed that it would take some days to find those that knew Jesus of Nazareth. Twenty years scatter men and women. Go to him, Sadduc ; a seat, Manahem.

They help Paul to a seat and relieve him of his staff and scrip. He tries to speak but cannot. Manahem fetches a pitcher and when he has drunk some water from it his tongue relaxes.

PAUL. Well may ye be astonished that I am here amongst you again in so short a time. Had I been to Jerusalem ye had seen my face no more. (*Turning to Manahem and Sadduc.*) I told you on the night of my arrival how at Ephesus I bade my disciples good-bye, for the spirit was strong in me to go to Jerusalem again

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and to see James, the brother of the Lord, for he is well thought of in the city. From him I took counsel and went with four men into the temple for purification, hoping thereby to appease the Jews by submission to the law, for what did it matter to me to concede certain rites and observances? It is the Spirit only that matters. I am weary and my brain is heavy, yet it seems that I must have told you how I was dragged out of the temple by the Jews and saved from death by the Roman guard. Ye remember these things? But this I did not tell you, that when a prisoner in the castle the Lord stood by me one night saying: "Be of good cheer, Paul, as thou hast testified to me in Jerusalem so must thou bear witness also in Rome." Therefore being commanded of the Lord to go to Rome it was not lawful for me to risk death at the hands of the Jews. It could not have been other than the Lord that stayed my feet. Not that I was moved by any fear, for so long as I live I serve Christ, and when I die I shall be joined to him in

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Heaven. It was not fear but the Lord himself that stayed my steps on the way to Jerusalem, and set me looking in a dream towards the crests of the hills. Then as my feet had stopped of their own will so did they begin to move, and without knowledge I wandered in the wilderness, neither seeing nor hearing, nor knowing anything of myself, like one in sleep, until I came upon a dwelling among the rocks. And looking round for the hermit of this place I saw a strange creature, at first not clear to me whether man or woman, but a woman it was ; like some shy animal she watched me from afar—maybe she had been following me all the way hither—and seeing that I meant no harm to her she came towards me, and lo ! I heard her speaking to herself of Jesus of Nazareth, and of the stone that had been rolled away from the sepulchre, and I said : “ Speak to me of him, for I am in search of them that knew him.” And she told me that he had appeared to her and had broken bread and eaten with his disciples ; but notwithstanding many

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apparitions and visitations they, being Jews, were loth to believe, saying, "Jesus of Nazareth died on the cross," and others saying, "The dead rise not until the Last Day."

PRIOR. Paul, thou hearest stories of Jesus of Nazareth with eagerness, and all are true to thee, but thou returnest without witnesses to testify that our brother here is not Jesus of Nazareth that was crucified on Calvary by order of Pilate.

PAUL. And that rose again three days after from the dead.

PRIOR. Thou reiteratest even to satiety, as Manahem says like one that hardly believeth in the story himself.

PAUL. None has believed as I have.

JESUS. In thyself, Paul, thou believest, and not in my teaching. Never hast thou inquired it out from my disciples, but thou hast preached only a miracle as if that were enough.

PRIOR. We have heard from thee that thou art the prophet of the Gentiles; go hence then and preach unto them the new faith. It is clearly not for us,

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since Jesus of Nazareth dwelleth among us. Paul, why tarriest thou?

PAUL. Forasmuch as this man hath deceived you and will deceive others if I protest not.

PRIOR. Protest in Jerusalem or in Rome, whither thou list, but not here. Preach, Paul, to the Gentiles, and it matters little if thy story be true or false, it will be good enough for the unclean. Go thy way, Paul, the Romans await thee at Cæsarea, and the shortest way will be pointed out to thee.

*Manahem and Sadduc go forward ;
Paul follows them but stands on the
threshold.*

PAUL. She comes hither, she whom I found in the wilderness is come to testify.

*Goes back to the Prior and they stand
together waiting for Mary's entrance.
Jesus stands with his back turned to her,
and she goes towards Paul and the Prior.*

MARY. I have come after thee, traveller, for God led thy steps to my dwelling-place that none knoweth in the world, for that I could tell that I knew Jesus. If we

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obey the law we may not do wrong . . . but it may be that every woman is forbidden to cross the threshold. Yet out of your years men look on women with chastened eyes, even if she were young; and I am an old woman, withered and wan, unsightly in all eyes, whose only merit is that she can tell the story of Jesus of Nazareth. But I read in thy face thy indifference and thy ears are closed. Yet it seemed to me that I was led hither by the hand.

PRIOR. It is not lawful for any woman to cross our threshold. · (*To Paul.*) Of what worth can her testimony be? She has not seen Jesus of Nazareth since he was lifted down from the cross.

As Mary turns to go she meets Jesus face to face and stands looking at him in silence.

MARY. Is it thou? Yea, master, it is.

JESUS. It is I, Mary, that thy heart discovereth through the veil of years.

MARY. There is no veil, master; though my eyes are old they see clearly and beautifully, as they did in the streets of

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Jerusalem when they were lifted in supplication to thee, and my ears hear the same voice they heard saying to the rabble that would have stoned me for my sin: "Let him that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." But are these things forgotten by thee in the years thou hast been here?

JESUS. Mary, naught is forgotten, though for a long while the past was blotted out. Last night it returned, all of it; the fragrance of the ointment with which thou didst anoint my feet, and the softness of the hair that dried them.

MARY. My great sorrow was that the hair that wiped thy feet should lose its blackness; now it is but a paltry handful of grey. Look not upon it, nor upon my body in which it is my shame to appear before thee. A woman changed and old am I, with rags only enough to cover her deformities. But, master, thou knowest my love of thee, for thou lookest into the heart, and that thou rememberest the fragrance of the ointment and the softness of my hair fulfilleth my desire. Draw

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nearer, master, for I would touch the feet over which my hair descended like a mantle—soft and silky my hair was then. That thou shouldst remember its softness as it flowed about thy feet is a great joy that must remain in my heart, for I have no words to tell it with. Look not on me, master, but remember me as I was when I knelt at thy feet. Then I was beautiful, so all men said, but I have forgotten their praise in love of thee.

JESUS. And in love of me thy beauty liveth, and it shall live for ever on earth, wherever my Gospel is preached, and in heaven among the saints from everlasting to everlasting.

Mary rises.

MARY. But who are these men, master, who listen with hard looks? I wot not if their hearts be as hard?

JESUS. That one, Mary, is Paul, the last of my disciples—another that denies me. (*Mary goes towards Paul.*) One whose faith is set on my resurrection.

MARY. But, master, thou didst come from the tomb?

THE APOSTLE

JESUS. Yea, Mary, I came out of the tomb.

MARY. And I was the first to see thee ?

JESUS. That is the story my apostle would hear from thy lips. I would hear thee tell it to him.

MARY (*to Paul*). Sir, myself and Mary, the mother of James, went to the garden in the dusk to anoint him with spices, and as we were saying : "But who shall roll the stone away for us ?" we saw it already rolled away. We looked into the empty sepulchre, and Mary, the mother of James, ran to tell Peter, but I remained to watch. Nor had I been waiting a long while when, looking up, I saw him through my tears, the master, and supposing him to be the gardener I said : "Sir, if thou hast borne him hence tell me where thou hast taken him ?" (*Turning to Jesus.*) Thou answeredst me, "Mary !" And turning to thee I answered, "Rabboni !" Afterwards the others saw thee, and thou didst grieve greatly for Peter's lack of faith.

THE APOSTLE

JESUS. Belief was always hard to Peter, a parcel of ancient rudiments, a follower after prophets.

PAUL. In that thou speakest truth ; so did I find him.

PRIOR. But I would hear the woman's story.

MARY. After he had been seen by Peter the master was seen by the others, and I have heard that some disputed afterwards whether it was in the spirit or the flesh that they saw him. No more than this do I know. Have I done thy will, master, and told them enough?

JESUS. Thou hast done well, Mary.

MARY. And now tell me, master, why thou didst hide thyself from me and for so long? And who cured thee of the wounds in thy feet and thy hands? Who tended on thee in the house whither thou wast taken?

JESUS. Joseph of Arimathea was bearing me to the tomb in the garden, but as I was carried thither my eyes opened and a sigh escaped my lips, and seeing and hearing thereby that I was not dead Joseph

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carried me to his house, and when my wounds were cured I returned here and have lived here ever since, disturbed only by dreams.

MARY. But since memory of us has come back to thee thou wilt come again amongst us? We have need of thee, master. We would hear and see thee.

JESUS. My staff is there, Mary, and my scrip is with it, for I was about to start for Jerusalem when my apostle returned from thee, saying that he could not go to Jerusalem to seek witnesses, for the Lord had bidden him to Rome.

MARY. Come unto Galilee, where thou wilt find men and women that still remember thy teaching.

JESUS. It may be that I shall hang again on the cross of Calvary.

MARY. Oh, master, why speakest thou like this to me? Such words rend my heart. Hang again, thou sayest, on a cross—for what end?

JESUS. Mary, I know not now what may befall me. I am, as other men, ignorant of the design of our Father

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which is in heaven. Last night I prayed again that this cup might pass from me. It may be that I shall be spared and it may be that I shall not. However these things be, I charge thee to tell no one that thou hast been here or hast seen me. Nor is it meet that thou shouldst weep, Mary, for thou lookest upon my face for the last time on earth ; but believe that the time is short that divides us from when we shall meet in heaven. Now return, Mary, to thy dwelling with joy and not despair in thy heart.

He leads her to the door, the Prior follows her out. Paul throws his scrip over his shoulder and takes up his staff.

JESUS. Whither goest thou?

PAUL. To Jerusalem, and I shall be there two days hence, if the Lord turneth not my steps back again. . . . Another revelation thou didst vouchsafe, Lord. My feet were turned back that I might meet this woman. A snare set by the Jews that discord may be spread amongst Christians and urge them to cry out, one against the other. And thou, too ! Yet I read no

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guile in thy face. But who can tell the ways of Satan?

JESUS. Look into my face, Paul, and tell me if thou redest no likeness to the face in the vision on the road to Damascus. (*Paul looks.*) None? Jesus of Nazareth spake to thee on that road. Tell me if the voice thou hearest now has naught in it of the voice that said, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" None? Thou wilt not hear nor see, Paul, or if thou seest and hearest it is with an eye and an ear only.

PAUL. Even if this woman's story were true, and even if thou hadst indeed escaped death on the cross, there has been a resurrection. I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me. Christ is risen in me. I am the resurrection.

JESUS. Then why fearest thou to find me in the flesh?

PAUL. Forasmuch as many will cry: "If Jesus of Nazareth hath not died we are yet among our sins." Strife and discord and dissension will follow thy going

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into Jerusalem. Men need a miracle, and faith in Christ and his resurrection have filled our hearts with love for each other, and gathered men and women together in peace, humility, and obedience as the law has never done. For twenty years we have laboured, and God allows no man to labour in vain. Beautiful are the feet of the apostles hurrying with the joyful tidings over the whole earth, so that all men may be saved. But thou knowest nothing of these things, Essene monk. Abide here, go not to Jerusalem. Trouble not the faithful with thy presence, trouble not the faithful with the appearance of Jesus of Nazareth, lest the world should fall back into idolatry.

JESUS. The worship of false gods is forbidden by the law, for out of falsehood only falsehood cometh, and that part of thy teaching which is false will poison the rest. But a tree may be saved by the lopping off of a bough, and better that thy friends should suffer to-morrow than the whole world hereafter, Paul. We will go

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together and proclaim the resurrection of the spirit.

Jesus throws his scrip over his shoulder and takes up his staff. Paul stands menacingly between Jesus and the doorway.

PAUL. Lord, thou didst bid me hasten to Rome to bear witness. Vouchsafe me now a revelation, for my eyes are darkened.

JESUS. I go to Jerusalem to save the world from crimes that will be committed in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, if I deny not before the people the Godhead thou hast thrust upon me.

PAUL. The Jews will stone thee, and may put thee on the cross again.

JESUS. Even so.

PAUL. And hearts will be troubled and broken. Who will understand? The whole Christian world will be thrown back upon idolatry. Jesus of Nazareth died for our sins in vain.

JESUS. Jesus of Nazareth has been raised from the dead to withstand thee.

PAUL. O blasphemy! blasphemy! Jesus of Nazareth, the great mediator between God and man, sitteth at the right hand

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of his father, and it is in his name that I strike thee down. (*Jesus falls; Paul draws back shocked by the rash blow. He advances towards the body and perceives that it is a dead man. After a moment's pause he speaks.*) It is well that he died, though the blow was not of my motion, but came from God even as the lightning. . . . If that man has spoken a lie he is worthy of death, and Christianity is saved by his dying; but if he spake the truth? . . . The truth is in the hands of God, and I go to Rome to meet my death, and through death to meet my Christ, my gain, the fruit of all my labour.

Paul hurries away. The Prior returns with some monks, and finding Jesus dead attributes his death to some sudden mental shock, without a thought of Paul; for who could strike one so truly good as Jesus of Nazareth? The monks carry the body away, and the Prior follows them.





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